As a steward of our nation's coastal and marine environments, NOAA addresses immediate and long-term environmental threats through its Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R). Scientists are on call around-the-clock to provide the U.S. Coast Guard and other emergency responders with critical information to help minimize environmental damage caused by oil and hazardous chemical spills. Environmental experts assess ecosystems compromised by historic or ongoing contamination and work with other organizations to conduct remediation, restoration, and monitoring of critical natural resources.

Protecting and Restoring Virginia's Coastal and Marine Areas

NOAA trust resources in Virginia include thousands of miles of coastline, and the Chesapeake Bay and tributary rivers support diverse trust species and habitats as well as important commercial and recreational fisheries. Coastal hazardous waste sites, including several Department of Defense facilities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, threaten natural and recreational resources. The relatively shallow, enclosed Chesapeake Bay is particularly vulnerable to impacts from oil spills and chemical releases, and the extensive amount of nearshore development and infrastructure along its coast poses an ongoing risk to living marine resources. The state map on the reverse page shows key response and restoration activities in the past year.

Emergency Response

NOAA is member of the Regional Response Team III, a component of the National Response System for West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. With the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA is currently updating the Coastal Maryland and Virginia Area Contingency Plan, which defines and communicates the roles of team members in planning for or responding to oil and chemical spills in the region.

Assessment and Restoration

The Norfolk Naval Shipyard is located in the tidewater region of southeastern Virginia near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Shipyard activities generated large quantities of industrial wastes, including oils containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos, batteries, and plating wastes, many of which were discharged directly into sensitive ecosystems in rivers and bays. NOAA worked with other trustees to assess ecological risk in the shipyard, and develop protective remedies at various sites, including the removal of landfill debris and heavy metal-contaminated abrasive blast material and the restoration of tidal marshes and riparian buffer.

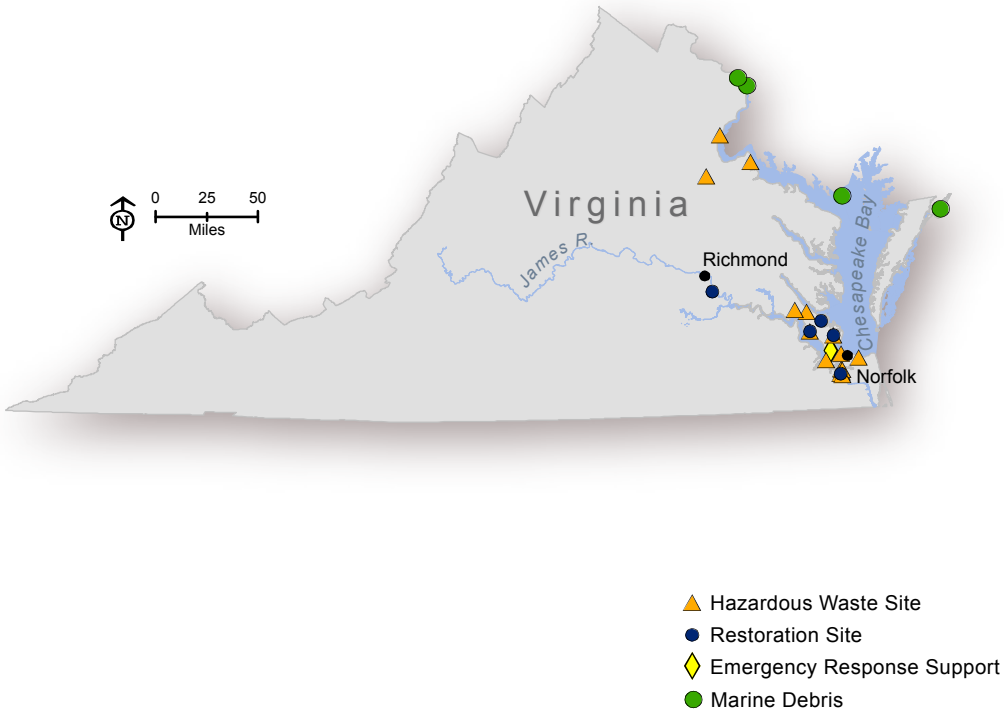
Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Scott Center

Marine Debris

NOAA is conducting a pilot project using remote sensing and imaging technologies to identify, map, and assess the impacts of derelict fishing gear and other submerged debris in selected areas of the Chesapeake Bay. An assessment of socioeconomic impacts will also be performed in partnership with the University of Maryland Chesapeake Biological Laboratory. The results of this pilot project will be used to develop a comprehensive effort to locate and remove harmful derelict crab pots throughout the Bay.

Research

NOAA collaborates with other federal, state, and local programs to develop innovative approaches to protecting marine and estuarine environments through research and synthesis of information. The Coastal Response Research Center (CRRC) brings together the resources of a research-oriented university and the field expertise of OR&R to conduct and oversee basic and applied research, conduct outreach, and encourage strategic partnerships in spill response, assessment, and restoration.



NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment

For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration, please call (301) 713-2989 or visit our Web site at response.restoration.noaa.gov

Banner photo courtesy of Captain Albert E. Theberge, NOAA Corps (ret.)